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THE OLD
SWIMMIN'
HOLE
AND
OTHER POEMS

J A M E S
W H I T C O M B
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THE
OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE
AND OTHER POEMS

BY
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

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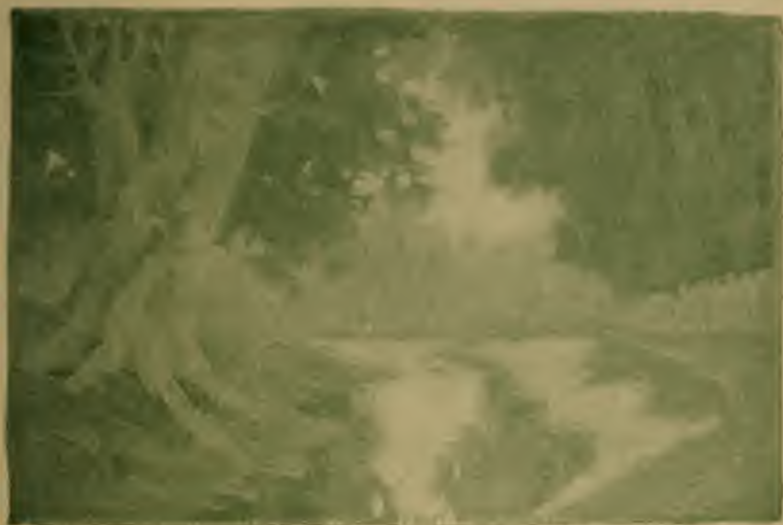
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THE OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE

O H! the old swimmin'-hole! Whare the crick so still
and deep

Looked like a baby-river that was laying half asleep,
And the gurgle of the worter round the drift jest below
Sounded like the laugh of something we onc't ust to
know

Before we could remember anything but the eyes
Of the angels lookin' out as we left Paradise;
But the merry days of Youth is beyond our controle,
And it's hard to part ferever with the old swimmin'-
hole.

THE OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! In the happy days of yore,
When I ust to lean above it on the old sickamore,
Oh! it showed me a face in its warm sunny tide
That gazed back at me so gay and glorified,
It made me love myself, as I leaped to caress
My shadder smilin' up at me with sich tenderness.
But them days is past and gone, and old Time's tuck
his toll
From the old man come back to the old swimmin'-hole.

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! In the long, lazy days
When the hum-drum of school made so many run-a-
ways,
How pleasant was the journey down the old dusty lane,
Whare the tracks of our bare feet was all printed so
plane
You could tell by the dent of the heel and the sole
They was lots o' fun on hands at the old swimmin'-
hole.
But the lost joys is past! Let your tears in sorrow roll
Like the rain that ust to dapple up the old swimmin'-
hole.
Thare the bullrushes growed, and the cattails so tall,
And the sunshine and shadder fell over it all;



THE OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE

And it mottled the worter with amber and gold
Tel the glad lilies rocked in the ripples that rolled;
And the snake-feeder's four gauzy wings fluttered by
Like the ghost of a daisy dropped out of the sky,
Or a wowedd apple-blossom in the breeze's controle,
As it cut acrost some orchurd to'rds the old swimmin'-
hole.

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! When I last saw the place,
The scenes was all changed, like the change in my face;
The bridge of the railroad now crosses the spot
Whare the old divin'-log lays sunk and fergot.
And I stray down the banks whare the trees ust to be—
But never again will theyr shade shelter me!
And I wish in my sorrow I could strip to the soul,
And dive off in my grave like the old swimmin'-hole.



THE ALL-GOLDEN

I

THROUGH every happy line I sing
I feel the tonic of the Spring.
The day is like an old-time face
That gleams across some grassy place
An old-time face—an old-time chum
Who rises from the grave to come
And lure me back along the ways
Of time's all-golden yesterdays.
Sweet day! to thus remind me of
The truant boy I used to love—
To set, once more, his finger-tips
Against the blossom of his lips,
And pipe for me the signal known
By none but him and me alone!

II

I see, across the school-room floor,
The shadow of the open door,
And dancing dust and sunshine blent
Slanting the way the morning went,
And beckoning my thoughts afar
Where reeds and running waters are;



Where amber-colored bayous glass
The half-drown'd weeds and wisps of grass.
Where sprawling frogs, in loveless key,
Sing on and on incessantly.
Against the green wood's dim expanse
The cattail tilts its tufted lance,
While on its tip—one might declare
The white "snake-feeder" blossomed there!

III

I catch my breath as children do
In woodland swings when life is new,
And all the blood is warm as wine
And tingles with a tang divine.
My soul soars up the atmosphere
And sings aloud where God can hear,
And all my being leans intent
To mark His smiling wonderment.
O gracious dream, and gracious time,
And gracious theme, and gracious rhyme—
When buds of Spring begin to blow
In blossoms that we used to know
And lure us back along the ways
Of time's all-golden yesterdays!



WITH THE CURRENT

RAREST mood of all the year!
Aimless, idle, and content—
Sky and wave and atmosphere
Wholly indolent.

Little daughter, loose the band
From your tresses—let them pour
Shadow-like o'er arm and hand
Idling at the oar.



Low and clear, and pure and deep,
Ripples of the river sing—
Water-lilies, half asleep,
Drowsed with listening:

Tremulous reflex of skies—
Skies above and skies below,—
Paradise and Paradise
Blending even so!

Blossoms with their leaves unrolled
Laughingly, as they were lips
Cleft with ruddy beaten gold
Tongues of pollen-tips.

Rush and reed, and thorn and vine,
Clumped with grasses lithe and tall—
With a web of summer-shine
Woven round it all.

Back and forth, and to and fro—
Flashing scale and wing as one,—
Dragon-flies that come and go,
Shuttled by the sun.

WITH THE CURRENT

Fairy lilt and lullabies,
Fine as fantasy conceives,—
Echoes wrought of cricket-cries
Sifted through the leaves.

O'er the rose, with drowsy buzz,
Hangs the bee, and stays his kiss,
Even as my fancy does,
Gypsy, over this.

Let us both be children—share
Youth's glad voyage night and day,
Drift adown it, half aware,
Anywhere we may.—

Drift and curve and deviate,
Veer and eddy, float and flow,
Waver, swerve and undulate,
As the bubbles go.

ON THE SUNNY SIDE

HI and whoop-hooray, boys!
Sing a song of cheer!
Here's a holiday, boys,
Lasting half a year!
Round the world, and half is
Shadow we have tried;
Now we're where the laugh is,—
On the sunny side!

Pigeons coo and mutter,
Strutting high aloof
Where the sunbeams flutter
Through the stable roof.
Hear the chickens cheep, boys,
And the hen with pride
Clucking them to sleep, boys,
On the sunny side!

ON THE SUNNY SIDE

Hear the clacking guinea;
Hear the cattle moo;
Hear the horses whinny,
Looking out at you!
On the hitching-block, boys,
Grandly satisfied,
See the old peacock, boys,
On the sunny side!

Robins in the peach-tree;
Bluebirds in the pear;
Blossoms over each tree
In the orchard there!
All the world's in joy, boys,
Glad and glorified
As a romping boy, boys,
On the sunny side!

Where's a heart as mellow?
Where's a soul as free?
Where is any fellow
We would rather be?
Just ourselves or none, boys,
World around and wide,
Laughing in the sun, boys,
On the sunny side!

THE OLD HAY-MOW

THE Old Hay-mow's the place to play
Fer boys, when it's a rainy day!
I good-'eal ruther be up there
Than down in town, er anywhere!

When I play in our stable-loft,
The good old hay's so dry an' soft,
An' feels so fine, an' smells so sweet,
I 'most ferget to go an' eat.

An' one time wunst I *did* ferget
To go 'tel dinner was all et,—
An' they had short-cake—an'—Bud he
Hogged up the piece Ma saved fer me!

Nen I won't let him play no more
In our hay-mow where I keep store
An' got hen-eggs to sell,—an' shoo
The cackle-un old hen out, too!



THE OLD HAY-MOW

An' nen, when Aunty she was here
A-visitun from Renssalaer,
An' bringed my little cousin,—*he*
Can come up there an' play with me.

But, after while—when Bud he bets
'At I can't turn no summersetts,—
I let him come up, ef he can
Ac' ha'f-way like a gentleman!





A SUDDEN SHOWER

BAREFOOTED boys scud up the street,
Or scurry under sheltering sheds;
And school-girl faces, pale and sweet,
Gleam from the shawls about their heads.

Doors bang; and mother-voices call
From alien homes; and rusty gates
Are slammed; and high above it all,
The thunder grim reverberates.

And then, abrupt,—the rain! the rain!—
The earth lies gasping; and the eyes
Behind the streaming window-pane
Smile at the trouble of the skies.

The highway smokes; sharp echoes ring;
The cattle bawl and cow-bells clank;
And into town comes galloping
The farmer's horse, with steaming flank.



A SUDDEN SHOWER

The swallow dips beneath the eaves,
And flirts his plumes and folds his wings;
And under the catawba leaves
The caterpillar curls and clings.

The humblebee is pelted down
The wet stem of the hollyhock;
And sullenly, in spattered brown,
The cricket leaps the garden-walk.

Within, the baby claps his hands
And crows with rapture strange and vague;
Without, beneath the rose-bush stands
A dripping rooster on one leg.





AT NINETY IN THE SHADE

HOT weather? Yes; but really not,
Compared with weather twice as hot.
Find comfort, then, in arguing thus,
And you'll pull through victorious!—
For instance, while you gasp and pant
And try to cool yourself—and can't—
With soda, cream and lemonade,
The heat at ninety in the shade,—
Just calmly sit and ponder o'er
These same degrees, with ninety more
On top of them, and so concede
The weather now is cool indeed!



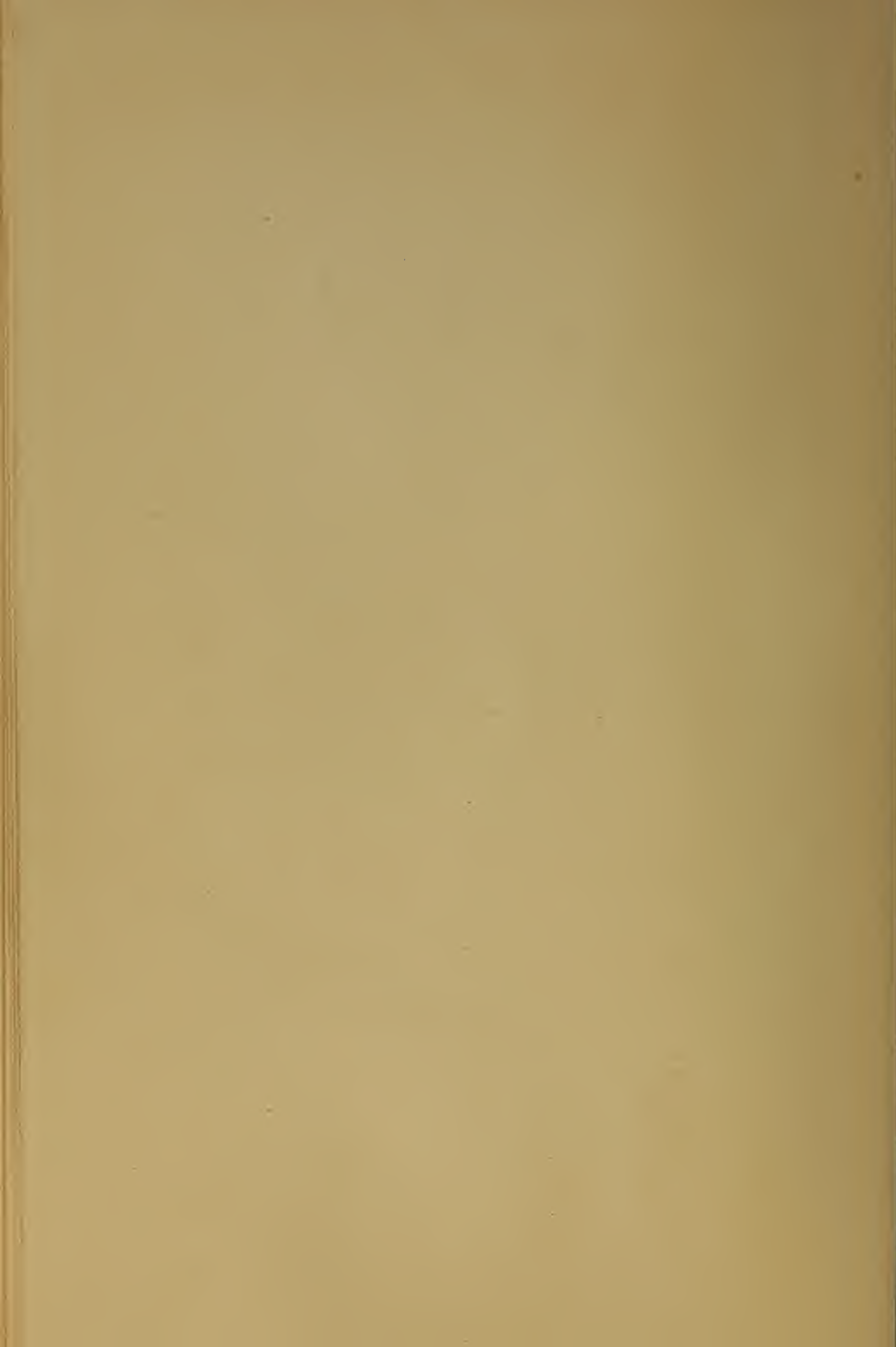
Think—as the perspiration dew
Your fevered brow, and seems to ooze
From out the ends of every hair—
Whole floods of it, with floods to spare—
Think, I repeat, the while the sweat
Pours down your spine—how hotter yet
Just ninety *more* degrees would be,
And bear *this* ninety patiently!
Think—as you mop your brow and hair,
With sticky feelings everywhere—
How ninety more degrees increase
Of heat like this would start the grease;
Or, think, as you exhausted stand,
A wilted “palmleaf” in each hand—
When the thermometer has done
With ease the lap of ninety-one;
O, think, I say, what heat might do
At one hundred and eighty-two—
Just twice the heat you now declare,
Complainingly, is hard to bear.
Or, as you watch the mercury
Mount, still elate, one more degree,
And doff your collar and cravat,
And rig a sponge up in your hat,

And ask Tom, Harry, Dick or Jim,
If this is hot enough for him—
Consider how the sun would pour
At one hundred and eighty-four—
Just twice the heat that seems to be
Affecting you unpleasantly,
The very hour that you might find
As cool as dew, were you inclined.
But why proceed when none will heed
Advice apportioned to the need?
Hot weather? Yes; but really not,
Compared with weather twice as hot!





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